CHATURANG KATHA

HEER-RANJHA

No. 509

PICTORIAL CLASSICS FOR YOUNG AND OLD

CHATURANG KATHA

Heer-Ranjha is a romantic idyll of the Punjab countryside which has fired the imagination of many a wandering bard and stirred the hearts of generations of villagers. The songs of *Heer*, with their mixture of joy, pain and ecstasy, form a poetic lament that is unmistakably Sufi in character and Ranjha's love for Heer has a spiritual, mystical quality that is in the best Sufi tradition. The most popular written version is by the eighteenth-century poet, Waris Shah.

Ranjha was a simple country lad whose life was made up of bright mornings followed by lazy, sun-drenched afternoons when he took the cattle out to pasture. His father's death changed all that. Young, dreamy and something of a poet, he left his village to court Heer—of the distinguished Syal clan. Heer's beauty is legendary. She was vital, vibrant, earthy—like a field of ripening wheat or flowering cane. And there were very few to equal her in farming and household skills. To this day, in the Punjab, she stands for all that is most desirable in a woman. How Ranjha met Heer, and how she became his sole pursuit, his whole universe, is the story of this pastoral romance.

We have retold *Heer* basing it mainly on Waris Shah, but blending with it folk elements belonging to the oral tradition; for a legend lives in the retelling, and there must have been, in days gone by, as many versions of *Heer-Ranjha* as there were bards who told the story to spell-bound village audiences.

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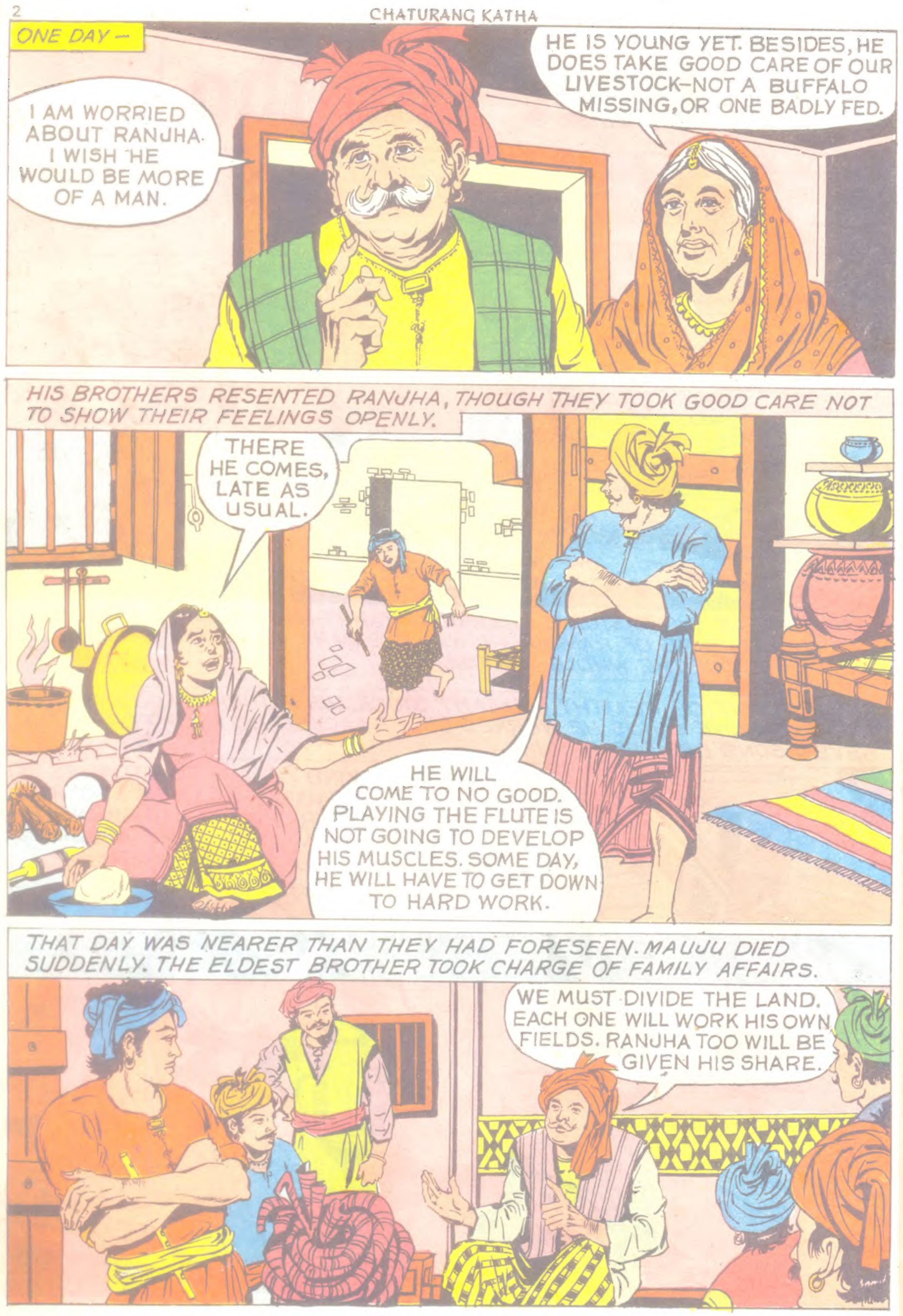
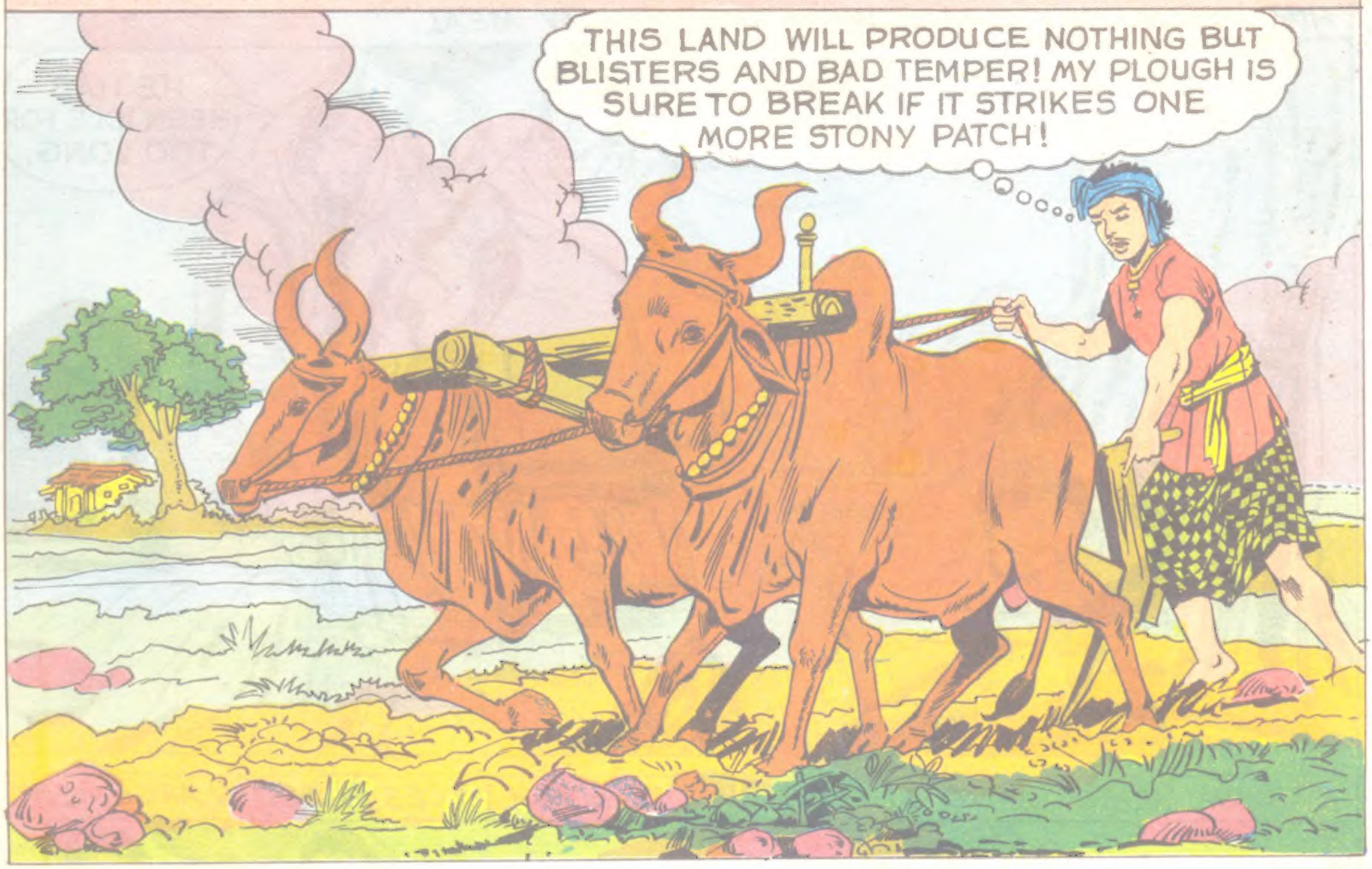
Heer-Ranjha

IN THE GREEN AND PASTORAL VILLAGE OF TAKHT-HAZARA, LIVED A YOUNG LAD BY THE NAME OF RANJHA. HE WAS THE DARLING OF HIS PARENTS, AND INDEED OF THE WHOLE VILLAGE.

RANJHA CAME OF WEALTHY PEASANT STOCK. HIS FATHER, MAUJU, OWNED THE EXTENSIVE LANDS HE WORKED ON. HE LACKED NO HELP, FOR HE HAD SEVEN SONS BESIDES RANJHA.


ONE DAY —
I AM WORRIED ABOUT RANJHA. I WISH HE WOULD BE MORE OF A MAN.
HE IS YOUNG YET. BESIDES, HE DOES TAKE GOOD CARE OF OUR LIVESTOCK—NOT A BUFFALO MISSING, OR ONE BADLY FED.
HIS BROTHERS RESENTED RANJHA, THOUGH THEY TOOK GOOD CARE NOT TO SHOW THEIR FEELINGS OPENLY.
THERE HE COMES, LATE AS USUAL.
HE WILL COME TO NO GOOD. PLAYING THE FLUTE IS NOT GOING TO DEVELOP HIS MUSCLES. SOME DAY, HE WILL HAVE TO GET DOWN TO HARD WORK.
THAT DAY WAS NEARER THAN THEY HAD FORESEEN. MAUJU DIED SUDDENLY. THE ELDEST BROTHER TOOK CHARGE OF FAMILY AFFAIRS.
WE MUST DIVIDE THE LAND. EACH ONE WILL WORK HIS OWN FIELDS. RANJHA TOO WILL BE GIVEN HIS SHARE.

SO RANJHA SET OUT EACH MORNING WITH HIS PLOUGHSHARE. IT WAS HARD GOING.



AND IT DID.

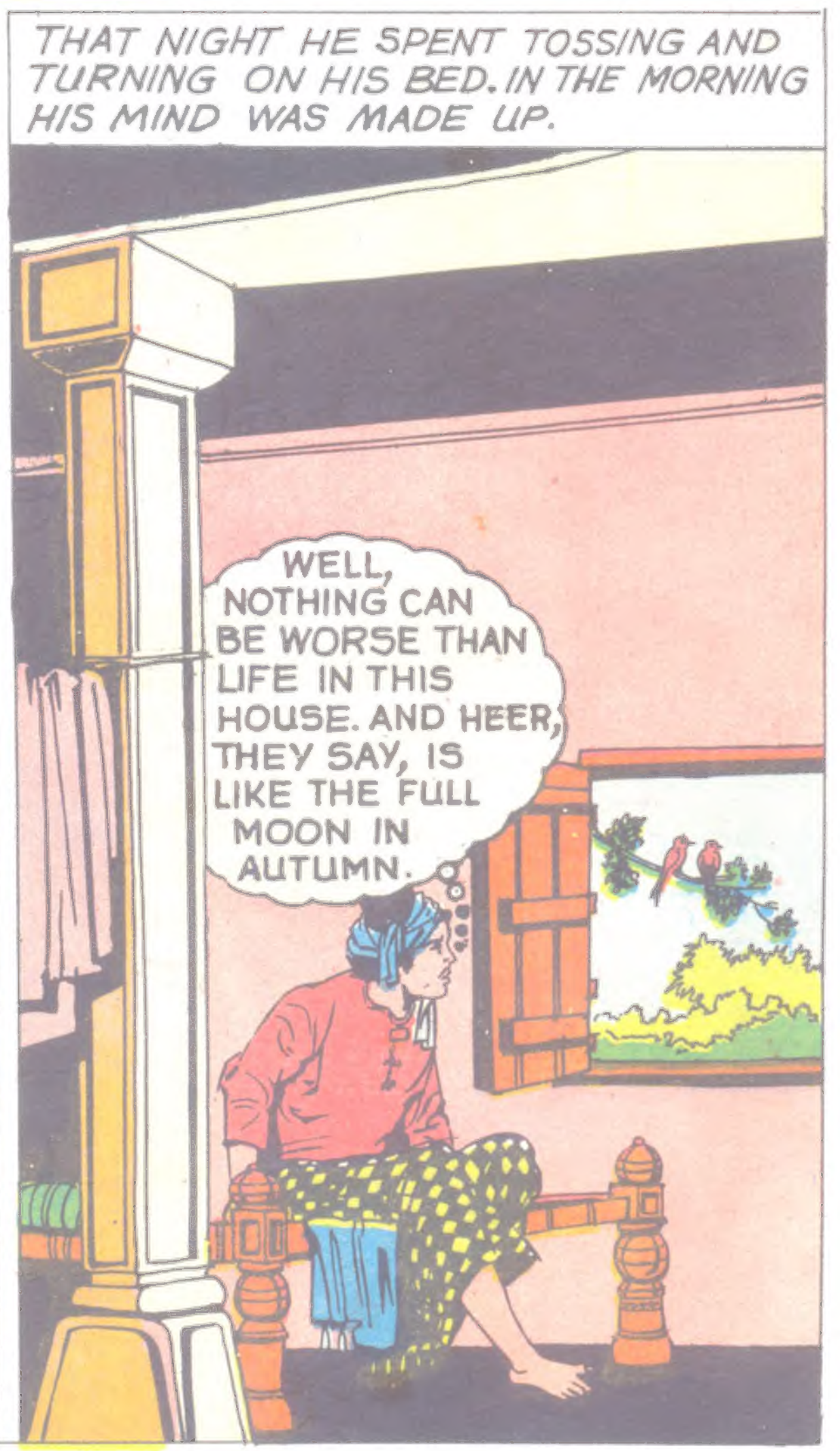
RANJHA SAT DOWN IN THE SHADE OF A TREE, TOOK OUT HIS FLUTE AND PLAYED ON IT.

HE WAS SOON FAST ASLEEP. AND THAT IS HOW HIS SISTERS-IN-LAW FOUND HIM WHEN THEY CAME WITH THE MIDDAY MEAL.
HE IS QUITE SHAMELESS.
HE HAS BEEN IDLE FOR TOO LONG.

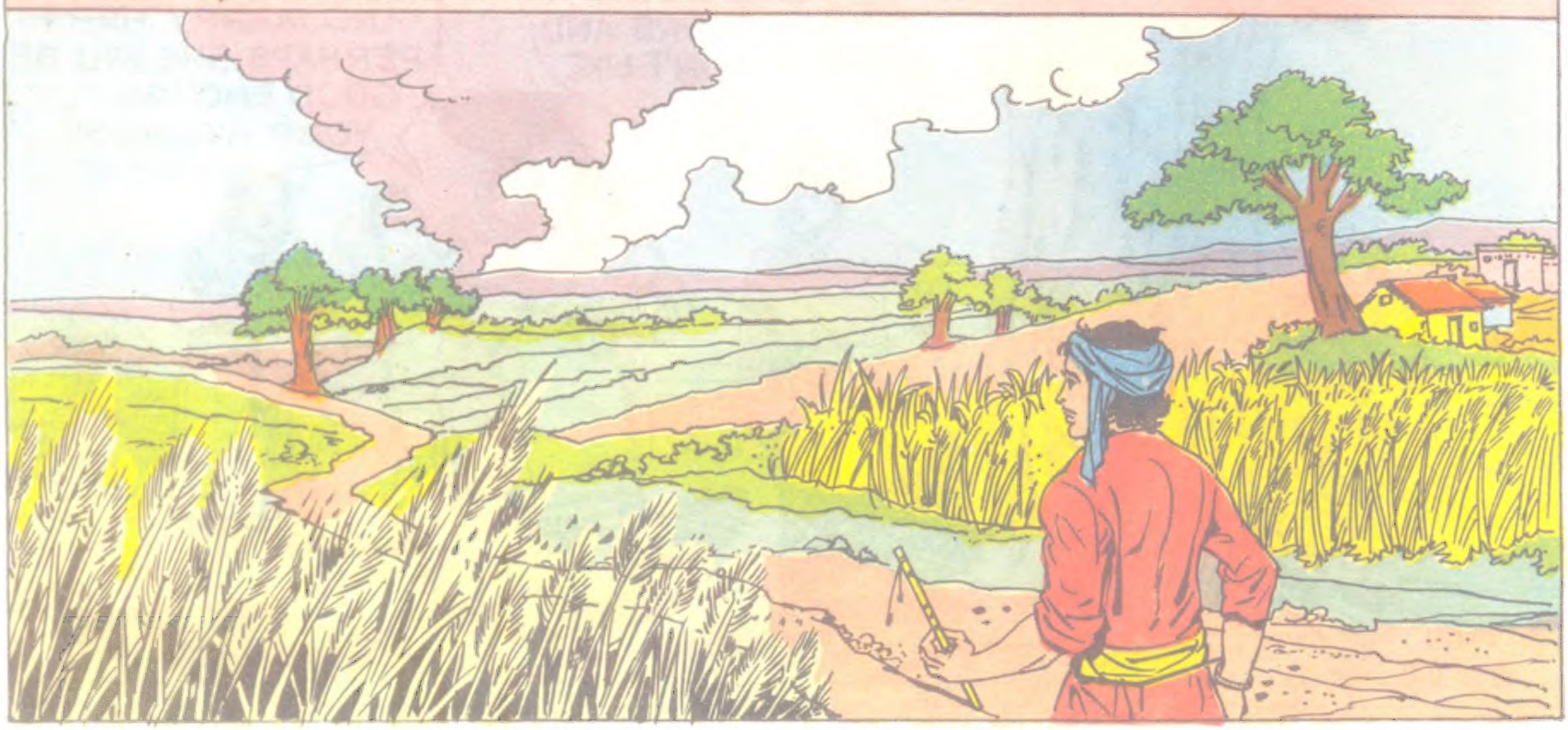
RANJHA WOKE UP TO THE SOUND OF HARSH VOICES RAISED IN ARGUMENT.
STOP YOUR TAUNTS! YOU NEVER DARED TO TREAT ME LIKE THIS WHEN FATHER WAS ALIVE.
HE IS ACCUSING US OF DUPLICITY!
AND WHY NOT? YOU WERE HONEY AND SUGAR WHEN HE WAS AROUND. MY BROTHERS ARE NO BETTER. THEY GAVE ME THE WORST BIT OF LAND.
HE IS TURNING AGAINST HIS ELDERS!

THE WOMEN WERE FURIOUS.
YOU DON'T LIKE YOUR BROTHERS AND YOU DON'T LIKE US.
WHY DON'T YOU GO TO JHANG IN SEARCH OF HEER AND MARRY HER? PERHAPS SHE WILL BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOUR HIGHNESS

RANJHA HAD HAD ENOUGH. HE TURNED ON HIS SISTERS-IN-LAW, HIS VOICE FULL OF ANGER AND DETERMINATION.
I WILL DO JUST THAT. WHEN I BRING HEER HOME, YOU WILL LOOK LIKE HER SERVANTS.

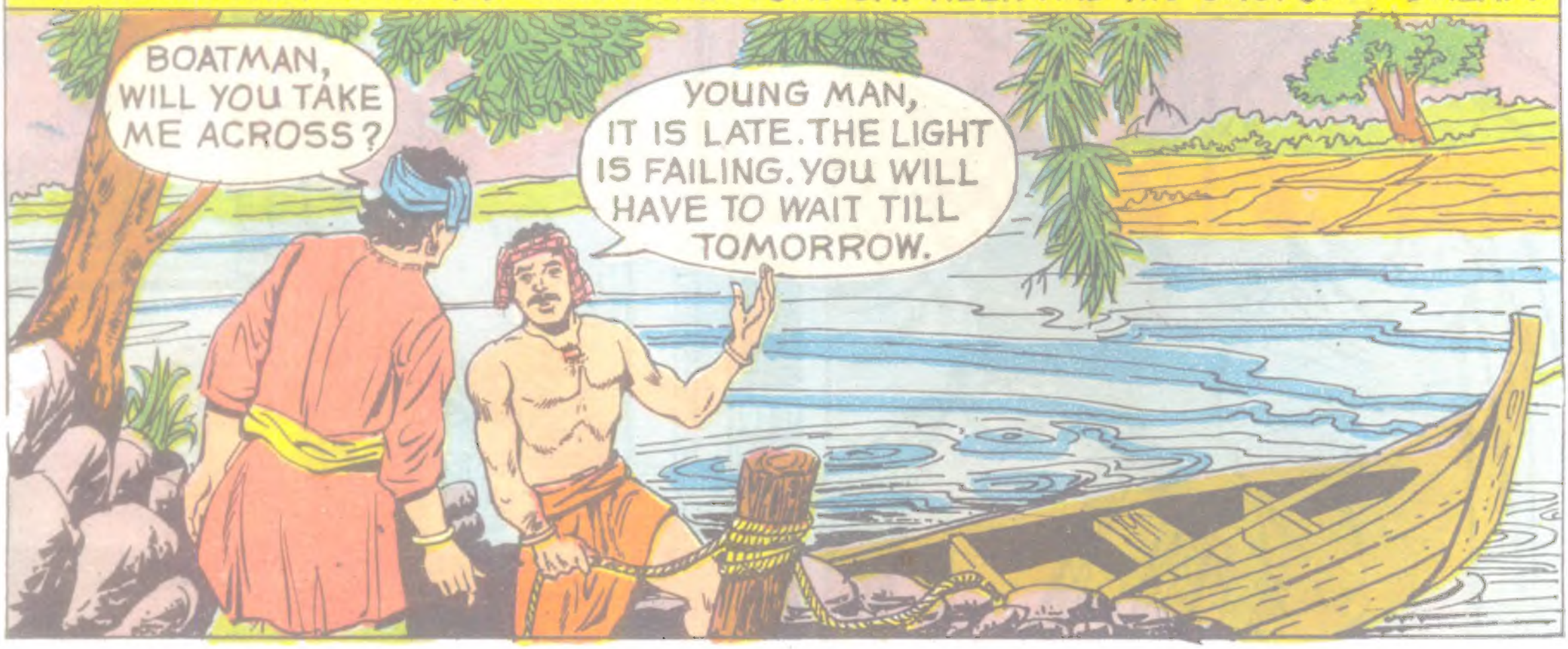

THAT NIGHT HE SPENT TOSSING AND TURNING ON HIS BED. IN THE MORNING HIS MIND WAS MADE UP.
WELL, NOTHING CAN BE WORSE THAN LIFE IN THIS HOUSE. AND HEER, THEY SAY, IS LIKE THE FULL MOON IN AUTUMN.

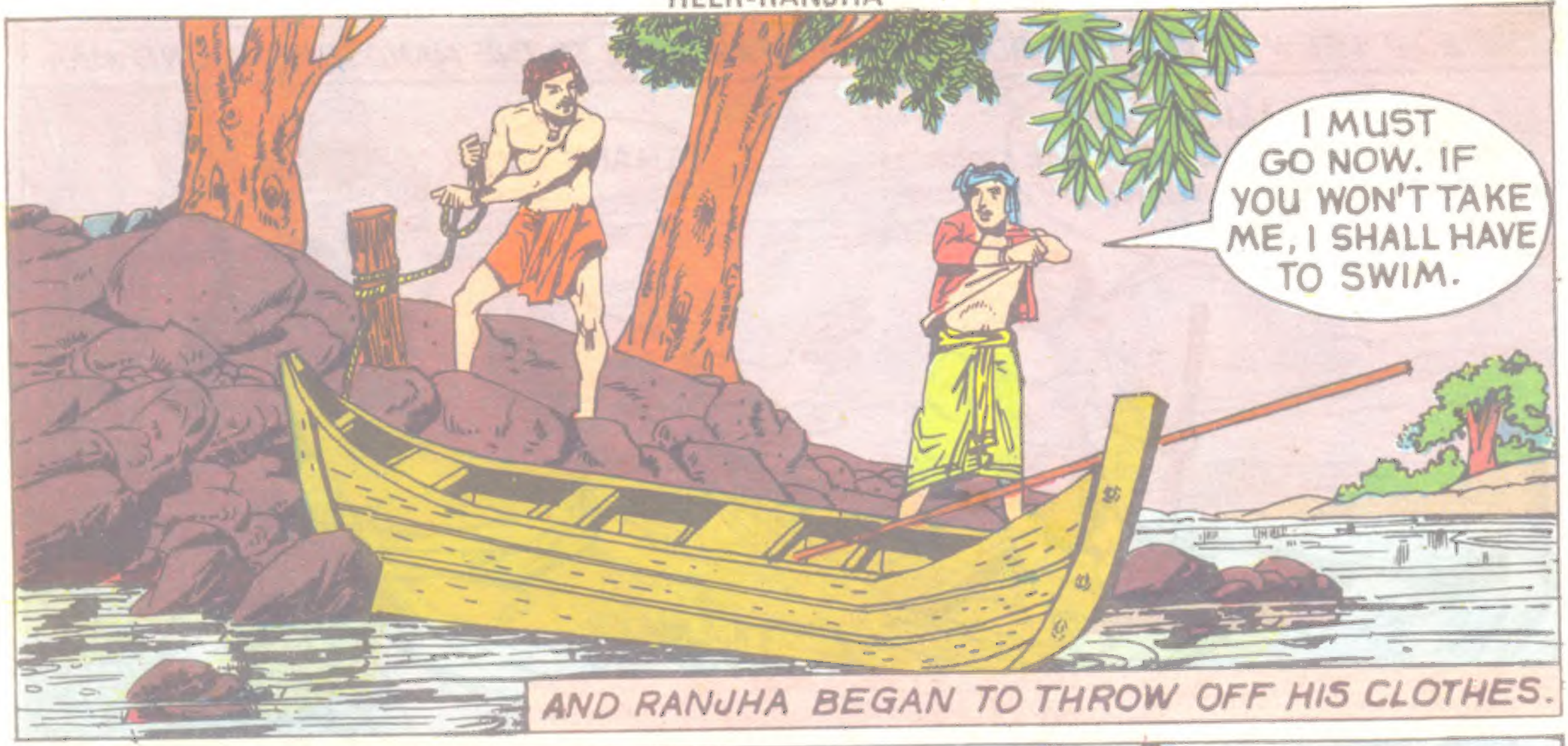
WITH LITTLE MORE THAN A DREAM IN HIS HEAD AND A FLUTE IN HIS HANDS, HE WAS ON THE WINDING COUNTRY ROAD THAT LED AWAY FROM TAKHT-HAZARA TO JHANG, THE HOME OF HEER.



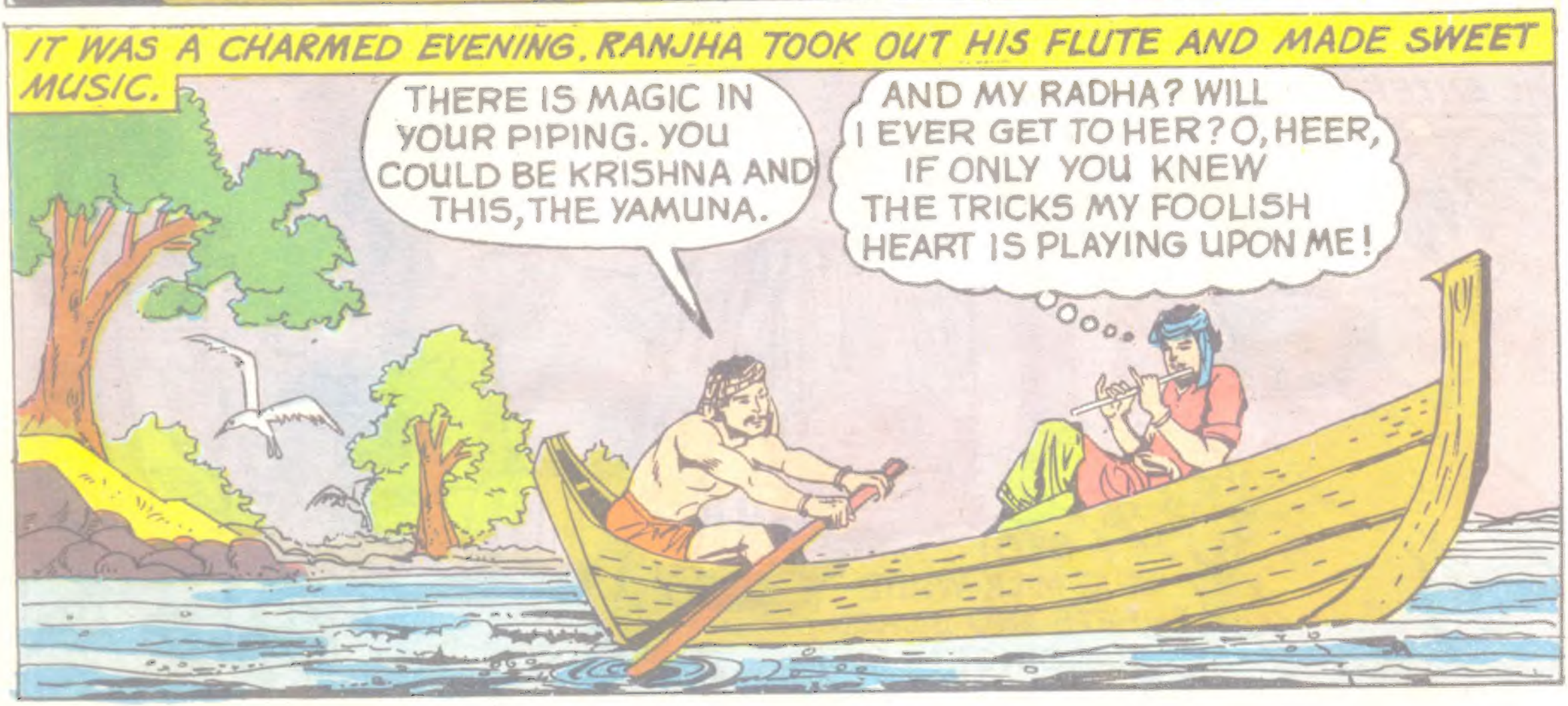
HE WALKED FOR DAYS, TAKING HIS FOOD WHERE HE COULD GET IT, AND HIS REST.

AND ONE LATE SUMMER EVENING, HE STOOD ON THE BANKS OF THE CHENAB. IT WAS JOURNEY'S END FOR RANJHA. BEYOND LAY HEER AND HIS UNSPOKEN DREAM.

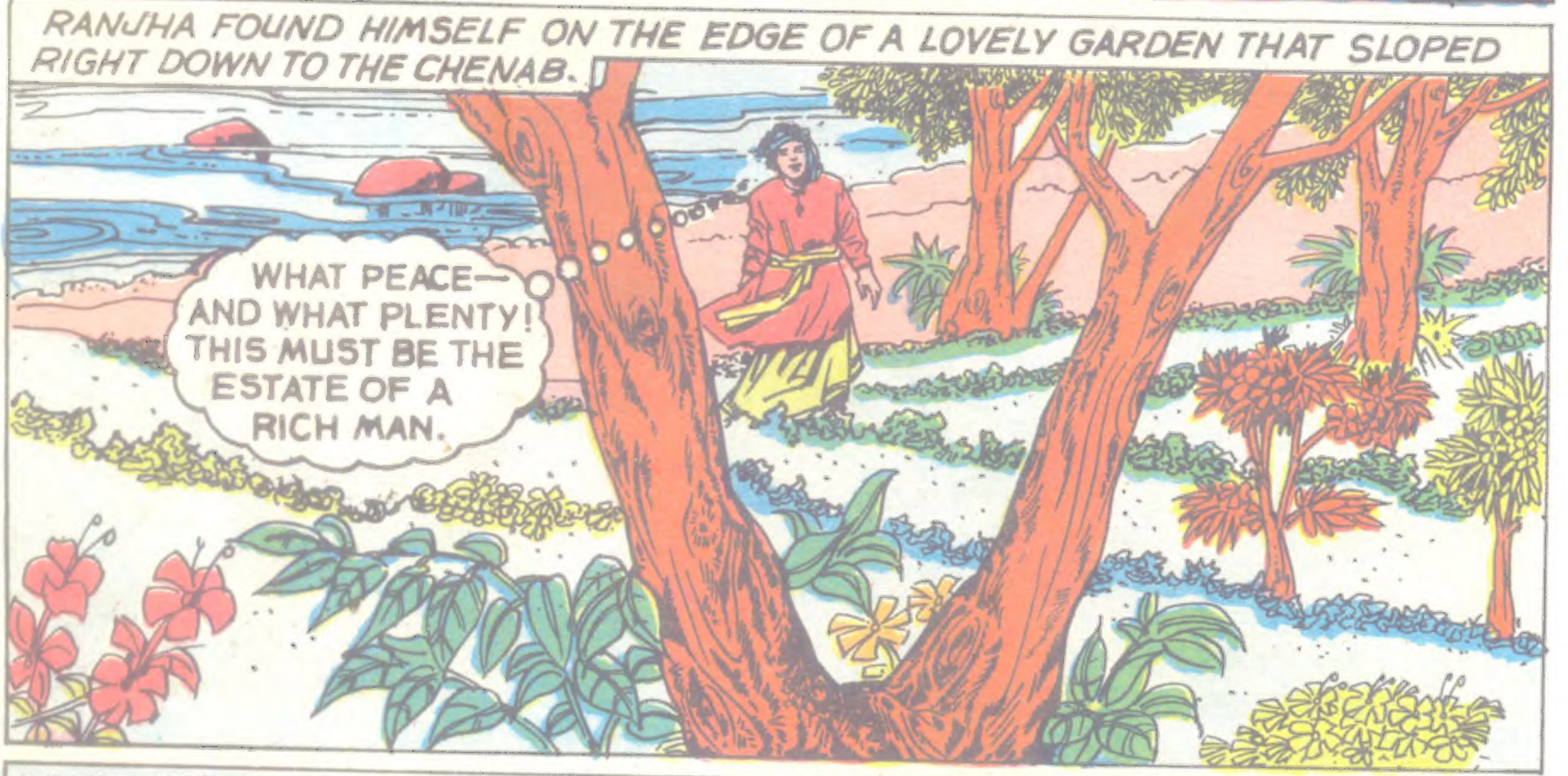


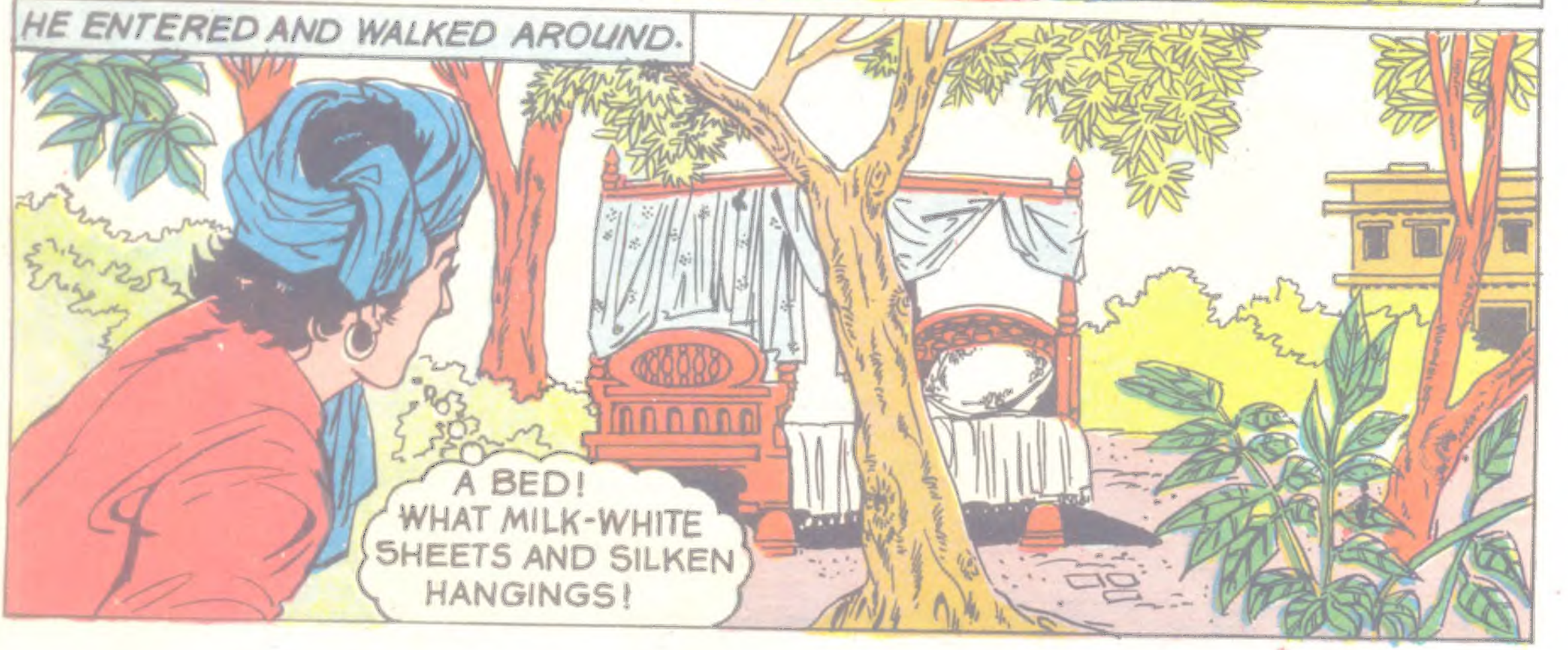

I MUST GO NOW. IF YOU WON'T TAKE ME, I SHALL HAVE TO SWIM.
AND RANJHA BEGAN TO THROW OFF HIS CLOTHES.

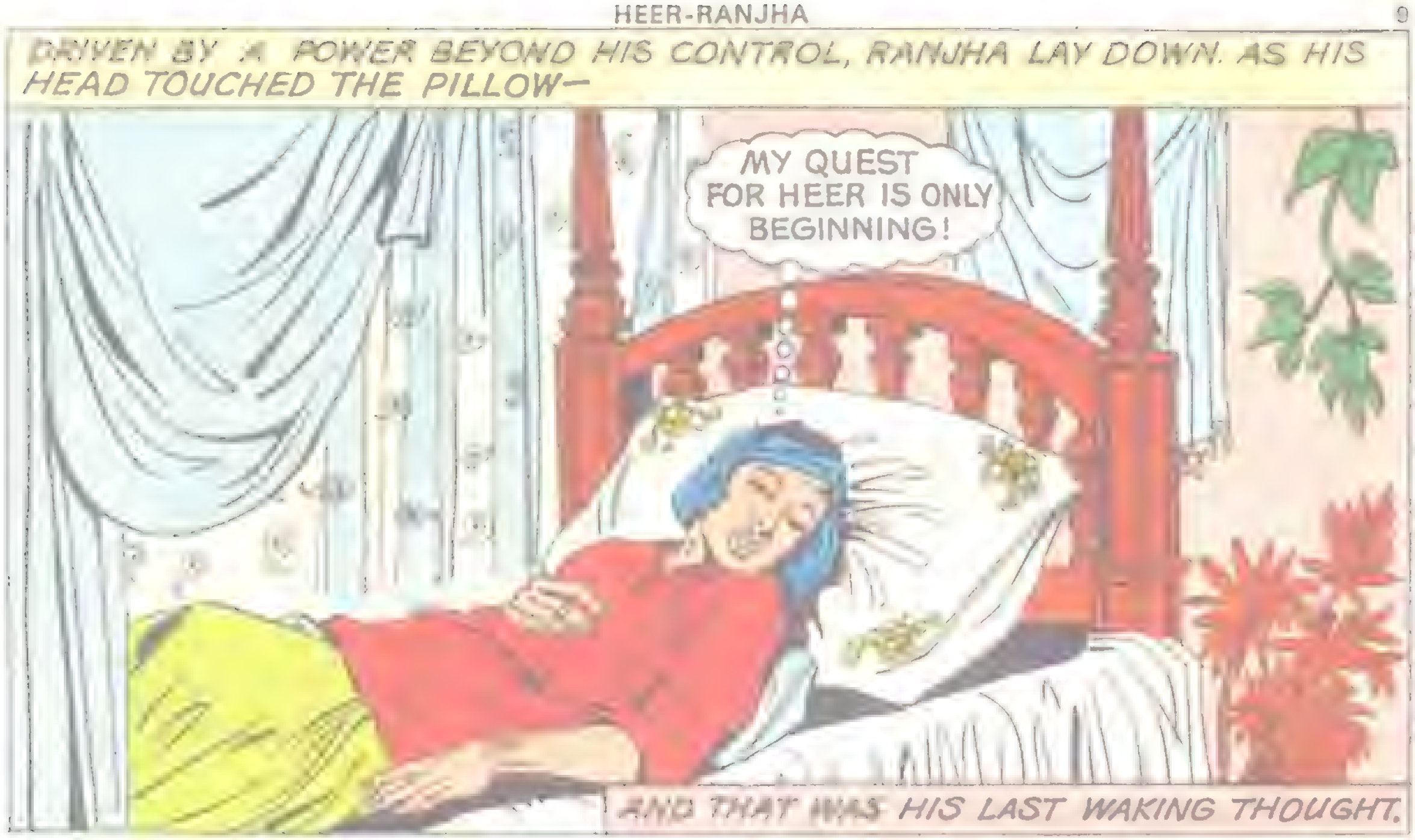
CALM DOWN, I WILL ROW YOU ACROSS. THIS IS THE CHENAB, NOT A VILLAGE STREAM.
AT WORST I CAN DROWN. LIFE IS NOT SO PRECIOUS THAT I SHOULD CLING TO IT.


IT WAS A CHARMED EVENING. RANJHA TOOK OUT HIS FLUTE AND MADE SWEET MUSIC.
THERE IS MAGIC IN YOUR PIPING. YOU COULD BE KRISHNA AND THIS, THE YAMUNA.
AND MY RADHA? WILL I EVER GET TO HER? O, HEER, IF ONLY YOU KNEW THE TRICKS MY FOOLISH HEART IS PLAYING UPON ME!

THE BOAT DREW UP AND THE BOATMAN SAID FAREWELL TO THE HANDSOME YOUNG MAN.
I WISH YOU LUCK IN WHATEVER IT IS YOU ARE CHASING—BE IT WORK, OR JUST A DREAM.
THANK YOU.


RANJHA FOUND HIMSELF ON THE EDGE OF A LOVELY GARDEN THAT SLOPED RIGHT DOWN TO THE CHENAB.
WHAT PEACE— AND WHAT PLENTY! THIS MUST BE THE ESTATE OF A RICH MAN.


HE ENTERED AND WALKED AROUND.
A BED! WHAT MILK-WHITE SHEETS AND SILKEN HANGINGS!


DRIVEN BY A POWER BEYOND HIS CONTROL, RANJHA LAY DOWN. AS HIS HEAD TOUCHED THE PILLOW—
MY QUEST FOR HEER IS ONLY BEGINNING!
AND THAT WAS HIS LAST WAKING THOUGHT.

DAY BROKE, GOLDEN AND GLORIOUS, AS THE HOUSEHOLD STIRRED AWAKE. RANJHA TOO WAS COMING OUT OF HIS DEEP SLUMBER.
BIRDSONG! HOW I LOVE THIS MORNING HOUR.

THE MUSIC OF BANGLES AND JINGLING ANKLETS. BUT...

HE SAT UP ABRUPTLY TO FACE A CROWD OF EXCITED WOMEN.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO SAY ?

SHE WILL BE HERE ANY MINUTE.

HEER WILL KILL US. HOW DO WE EXPLAIN AWAY THIS YOUNG MAN ?

IT WAS TOO LATE. SHE WAS THERE, A VISION IN SATIN AND SILK, THE VERY IMAGE OF YOUTH AND LOVELINESS.

WHAT A WEIGHT OF HAIR ! HOW IT TUMBLES DOWN TO HER WAIST !

RANJHA, THE DREAMER, THE POET, THE LOVER OF BEAUTY, MISSED NOTHING.

HOW SHE MOVES—LIKE A SWAN ON SMOOTH WATERS!

HEER HAD COME RIGHT UP, WHILE RANJHA SAT ROOTED TO THE SPOT.

HOW ANGER BECOMES HER. HER EYES FLASH LIGHTNING.

THEIR FIRST EXCHANGE OF WORDS WAS STRANGE

HOW DARE...

BELOVED!

RANJHA HAD BEEN RAPT IN HIS OWN PRIVATE WORLD OF LOVE. HEER BIT BACK THE SHARP WORDS THAT ROSE TO HER TONGUE.

TELL ME, WHO ARE YOU? WHY ARE YOU HERE?

RANJHA TOLD HER. HE HELD NOTHING BACK. HEER LISTENED, HANGING ON HIS EVERY WORD.

HER AMAZED COMPANIONS WANDERED AWAY.
SHE IS FUNNY. READY TO JUMP ON HIM ONE MOMENT, AND ALL SWEETNESS THE NEXT.
WHO COULD RESIST THIS GOD IN RAGS—FOR THAT IS WHAT HE IS.

HEER AND RANJHA SAT SIDE BY SIDE, TALKING OF EVERYTHING AND OF NOTHING.
I SEE YOU PLAY THE FLUTE. PLAY ME SOMETHING—SOMETHING GAY.
I WILL. AND THIS WILL BE OUR TUNE. SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE THE DAWN OF LOVE—OUR LOVE.

YOU MAKE ME NERVOUS WITH SUCH TALK. AFTER ALL, I HARDLY KNOW YOU.
YOU DO. YOU HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN ME. I WAS A MAN, AND YOU A MAIDEN, IN THE MANSIONS OF INDRA. I WAS KRISHNA AND YOU RADHA. AND NOW, I AM RANJHA, YOU HEER.

RANJHA PLAYED A HAUNTING MELODY.
YOU DO PLAY THE FLUTE LIKE KRISHNA. WE'LL HAVE TO GET YOU TO MIND THE CATTLE AS HE DID. THAT IS THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP YOU HERE.

HEER ARRANGED FOR RANJHA TO GO IN AND THEN WENT IN TO HER FATHER, CHUCHAK.
FATHER, YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A MAN TO TEND YOUR BUFFALOES. I'VE FOUND SOMEONE WHO WOULD SUIT YOU BEAUTIFULLY.
SEND HIM IN, HEER. YOU ARE AS CLEVER AS YOU ARE LOVELY. HOW AM I GOING TO MANAGE WHEN YOU GET MARRIED AND GO AWAY?

RANJHA APPEARED, BATHED AND CLEANLY CLAD. CHUCHAK WAS SCEPTICAL...

HE LOOKS TOO DELICATE AND WELL-BRED FOR SUCH MENIAL WORK.

BUFFALO-KEEPING IS HARD WORK, AND LONELY.

I LOVE BUFFALOES. AND SOLITUDE DOES NOT BOTHER ME.

RANJHA TURNED OUT TO BE THE BEST BUFFALO-KEEPER THEY HAD EVER HAD.

NOT A SINGLE BUFFALO MISSING! AND WE GET MORE MILK, MORE BUTTER, MORE CREAM.

THE ANIMALS FOLLOW HIM LIKE CHARMED CREATURES WHEN HE PLAYS THE FLUTE.

HM! AND SO DOES HEER. SHE IS JUST A BIT TOO ATTENTIVE TO HIS NEEDS.

PERHAPS, YOU ARE RIGHT.

* BREAD

** CRUMBLED, SWEETENED BREAD

THEIR LOVE GREW, BLIND AND UNHEEDING OF PRYING EYES. ONE DAY, WHILE HEER WAS AWAY FETCHING WATER—
GOOD SIR, I AM STARVING.
HERE, TAKE THIS CHURI. I HAVE HAD MY FILL.

YOU'VE FINISHED ALREADY!
ACTUALLY, I DIDN'T EAT ALL OF IT. A LAME BEGGAR CAME BY AND I GAVE HIM WHAT WAS LEFT.

HEER SENSED DANGER.
RANJHA, THAT WAS NO BEGGAR. THAT WAS MY UNCLE KAIDO. HE HAS BEEN CARRYING TALES ABOUT US.
LET HIM. AFTER ALL, WE LOVE EACH OTHER. I AM GOING TO MARRY YOU AS SOON AS I CAN GO BACK HOME AND COME TO FETCH YOU IN STYLE.

HEER'S HEAD SWAM WITH JOY.

MY RANJHA, TELL ME YOU WILL ALWAYS BE MINE.

DID YOU DOUBT IT ?

HEER RAN HOME, HEART LEAPING WITH EXCITEMENT. SHE BURST INTO HER MOTHER'S ROOM AND—

MOTHER...

HER MOTHER WAS SILENT, EVEN COLD. HEER SHUDDERED.

HEER, I MUST TALK TO YOU.

HEER SAT DOWN FACING HER MOTHER.

YOU BELONG TO A GOOD FAMILY. ITS HONOUR IS IN YOUR KEEPING, ENTIRELY.

MOTHER, REALLY ! WHAT A LECTURE. AND WHAT HAVE I DONE, PRAY, TO BLACKEN THE FAMILY RECORD ?

NOTHING YET, I HOPE. BUT YOU DO DISAPPEAR WITH THE MOODS WITH THAT BUFFALO-KEEPER
SO, KAIDO HAS BEEN CARRYING TALES. WHAT AN EVIL MAN! RANJHA DESERVES TO EAT GOOD FOOD—LOOK AT THE WAY OUR BUFFALOES HAVE PROSPERED UNDER HIM.

THAT IS NOT THE POINT. TONGUES ARE WAGGING.

HEER HAD HAD ENOUGH.
MOTHER, I LOVE HIM TO DISTRACTION. AND HIS FAMILY IS AS GOOD AS OURS. HE DOES THIS MENIAL WORK ONLY TO BE NEAR ME. YOU SHOULD HAVE GUESSED BY NOW. OR DON'T YOU WANT TO FACE THE TRUTH?

CHICHAK AND HIS WIFE SAT UP ALL NIGHT.
WHAT DO WE DO? SHE'S MADLY IN LOVE.
GET HER MARRIED OFF. THE KHERAS OF RANGPUR HAVE SHOWN INTEREST, KAIDO SAYS.

PRESENTS WERE EXCHANGED AND THE VILLAGE WAS AGOG WITH DETAILS OF THE KHERA-SIYAL WEDDING.

HEER WILL MAKE A LOVELY BRIDE.

THE KHERAS ARE RICH, VERY RICH. THERE WILL BE ENDLESS MERRY-MAKING.

FOR HEER IT WAS THE END OF GIRLHOOD AND THE DEATH OF HER DREAMS. SHE MET RANJHA.

RANJHA, I WILL NEVER CONSENT TO THIS MARRIAGE. TAKE ME AWAY.

WHAT, LIKE A RUNAWAY BRIDE? I WILL TAKE YOU HOME LIKE A QUEEN OR NOT AT ALL.

HELPLESS, THEY WATCHED THINGS HAPPEN LIKE TWO PUPPETS. RIGHT THROUGH THE DAYS BEFORE THE WEDDING, HEER KEPT DECLARING HER OBJECTION.

THE PRIEST COAXED, CAJOLED, THREATENED— TO NO PURPOSE. THE WEDDING DAY DAWNED.

AND THE CEREMONIES WERE COMPLETED.

* BRIDEGROOM'S PROCESSION

* BRIDAL PALANQUIN

RANJHA BECAME A PRACTISING FAKIR, CURING PEOPLE, GIVING GUIDANCE. BUT HIS BOYHOOD DREAM WAS NOW HIS VISION, HIS ONLY SALVATION.

AT RANGPUR, THE BRIDE WAS WELCOMED WITH GREAT POMP, CEREMONY AND SPLENDOUR.

SHE LOOKS LIKE A GODDESS. HOW LUCKY SAIDO IS!

SHE SEEMS FAR FROM HAPPY, THOUGH. SOME TEARS ARE NATURAL, BUT SHE IS AS PALE AS DEATH.

THINGS GOT WORSE. HEER WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH SAIDO.

WE CAN'T GO ON MAKING EXCUSES FOR HER.

I WONDER IF RUMOURS ABOUT HER AND THAT BUFFALO-KEEPER ARE TRUE, AFTER ALL.

SAITI, SAIDO'S SISTER, WAS HER CONSTANT COMPANION. SHE SENSED A DEEP AND GENUINE SORROW IN HEER. SHE GRADUALLY WON HEER'S CONFIDENCE. ONE DAY—

HEER, THERE IS SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND.

SAITI, THERE IS ONLY ONE MAN FOR ME—RANJHA. HE IS A FAKIR, I HEAR, BUT I MUST STILL BE HIS LOVE.

SAITI, SUFFERING FROM DISAPPOINTED LOVE HERSELF, DECIDED TO HELP HEER.

HEER, A GIRL FROM JHANG IS GOING HOME TOMORROW. WE COULD SEND A MESSAGE.

TELL MY RANJHA I AM STILL HIS. NO ONE HAS TOUCHED ME, WILL TOUCH ME.

RANJHA RECEIVED THE MESSAGE AND LEFT FOR RANGPUR IMMEDIATELY.

THERE IS A NEW FAKIR IN TOWN. HE HAS MAGICAL CURING POWERS.

HE IS HANDSOME TOO, AND VERY YOUNG.

IT WAS NOT LONG BEFORE THE NEWS REACHED HEER.
SO, MY RANJHA IS HERE!

HEER AND SAITI MADE THEIR PLANS.
AS WE RETURN FROM OUR EVENING WALK, YOU MUST RAISE AN ALARM AND SAY I HAVE BEEN BITTEN BY A SNAKE.

THAT EVENING –
HEER IS LYING IN A DEAD FAINT—A SNAKE...
QUICK, BRING HER IN.

AS HEER LAY PALE AND STILL -
LET'S GET THE NEW FAKIR.
SAIDO IS RIGHT.

THIS WAS THE MOMENT RANJHA WAS WAITING FOR. AS THEY WALKED TO THE HOUSE -
WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?
BARELY AN HOUR AGO.

DID SOMEONE SEE THE SNAKE?
YES, MY SISTER SAITI DID. YOU CAN ASK HER FOR THE DETAILS.

RANJHA WAS RECEIVED WITH GREAT REVERENCE.

SIR, YOU ARE OUR ONLY HOPE.

THERE ARE TOO MANY PEOPLE HERE. LEAVE ME ALONE WITH THE PATIENT AND YOUR SISTER.

THEIR MEETING WAS JOYOUS. THERE WAS NO TIME TO WASTE.

TOMORROW AT MY TREE.

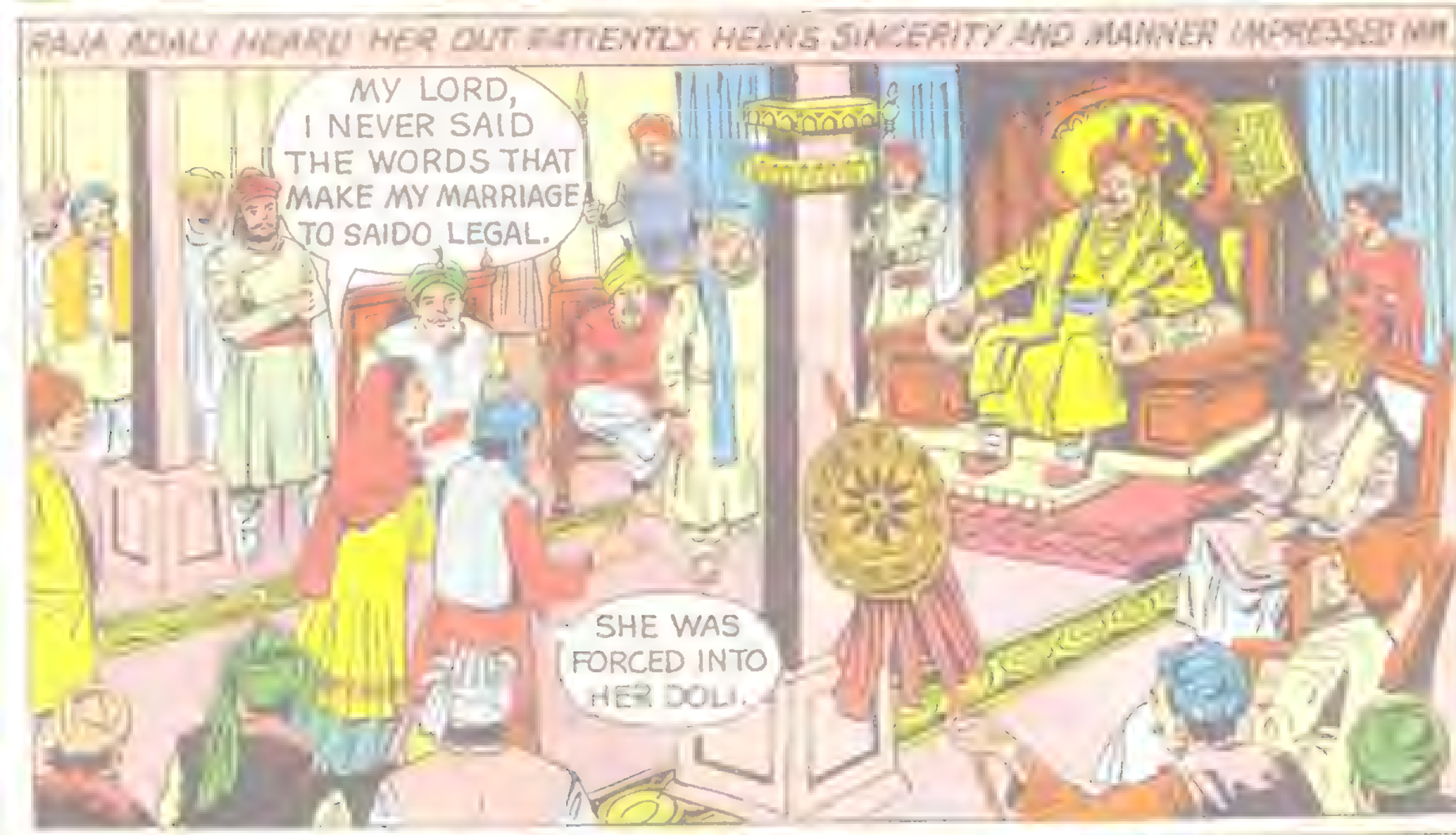
I WILL BE THERE, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS.

THE NEXT DAY HEER AND RANJHA WERE OUT OF FANGPUR. THE KHERAS SENT THEIR MEN OUT IN HOT PURSUIT.

HORSEMEN! HEER, WE ARE TRAPPED.

I WILL FIGHT FOR YOU TO THE DEATH, RANJHA!

AS THEY LED THEM AWAY—
I DEMAND AN AUDIENCE WITH RAJA ADALI. I WANT JUSTICE.


RAJA ADALI HEARD HER OUT PATIENTLY. HEERS SINCERITY AND MANNER IMPRESSED HIM.
MY LORD, I NEVER SAID THE WORDS THAT MAKE MY MARRIAGE TO SAIDO LEGAL.
SHE WAS FORCED INTO HER DOLI.

RAJA ADALI ORDERED THEM TO BE RELEASED.
THIS MAN AND WOMAN BELONG TO EACH OTHER.
ALWAYS HAVE, MY LORD. OUR LOVE GOES BACK THROUGH MANY LIFETIMES!

AND SO HEER AND RANJHA JOURNEYED BACK TO JHANG, HER PARENTS' HOME.

HEER, ONCE WE GET TO JHANG, I WILL GO BACK TO MY VILLAGE AND BRING A BARAT TO TAKE MY QUEEN HOME.

RANJHA, I AM FRIGHTENED FOR US. MUST YOU GO?

DON'T BE AFRAID. THEY DARE NOT HARM US.

YOU DON'T KNOW MY UNCLE KAIDO. HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN ENVIOUS OF OUR HAPPINESS.

HEER'S PARENTS RECEIVED THEM, AND ALL SEEMED WELL. RANJHA LEFT FOR TAKHT-HAZARA.

I WONDER WHAT MY SISTERS-IN-LAW WILL HAVE TO SAY NOW!

HEER'S FEARS WERE NOT ENTIRELY UNFOUNDED. RANJHA'S ABSENCE GAVE KAIDO TIME TO WORK ON HEER'S FATHER.

HOW CAN YOU GIVE A GIRL AWAY IN MARRIAGE TWICE? IN THE EYES OF THE PEOPLE SHE IS MARRIED TO SAIDO.

THEY WILL KNOW THE TRUTH SOON ENOUGH.

BE PRACTICAL. THEY ONLY KNOW THAT HEER WENT WITH THE KHERA BARAT. NOW SHE IS BACK AND WAITING FOR ONE FROM TAKHT-HAZARA.

YOU HAVE A POINT!

CHUCHAK BROODED OVER THE MATTER AND CAME TO A TERRIBLE DECISION.

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY. IT BREAKS MY HEART, BUT HEER MUST DIE!

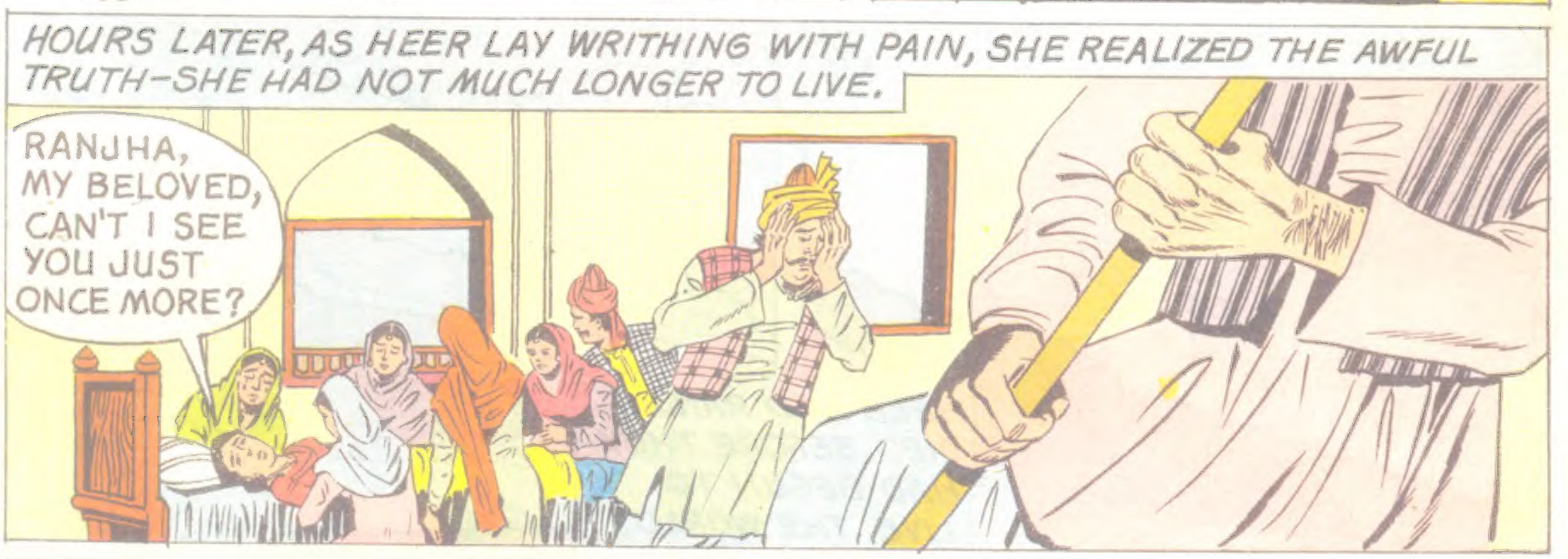
HEER WAS BLISSFULLY UNAWARE OF WHAT WAS GOING ON. THIS TIME, SHE WAS JOYFUL OVER THE SMALLEST DETAIL.
HOW BEAUTIFUL THE MEHNDI* LOOKS.

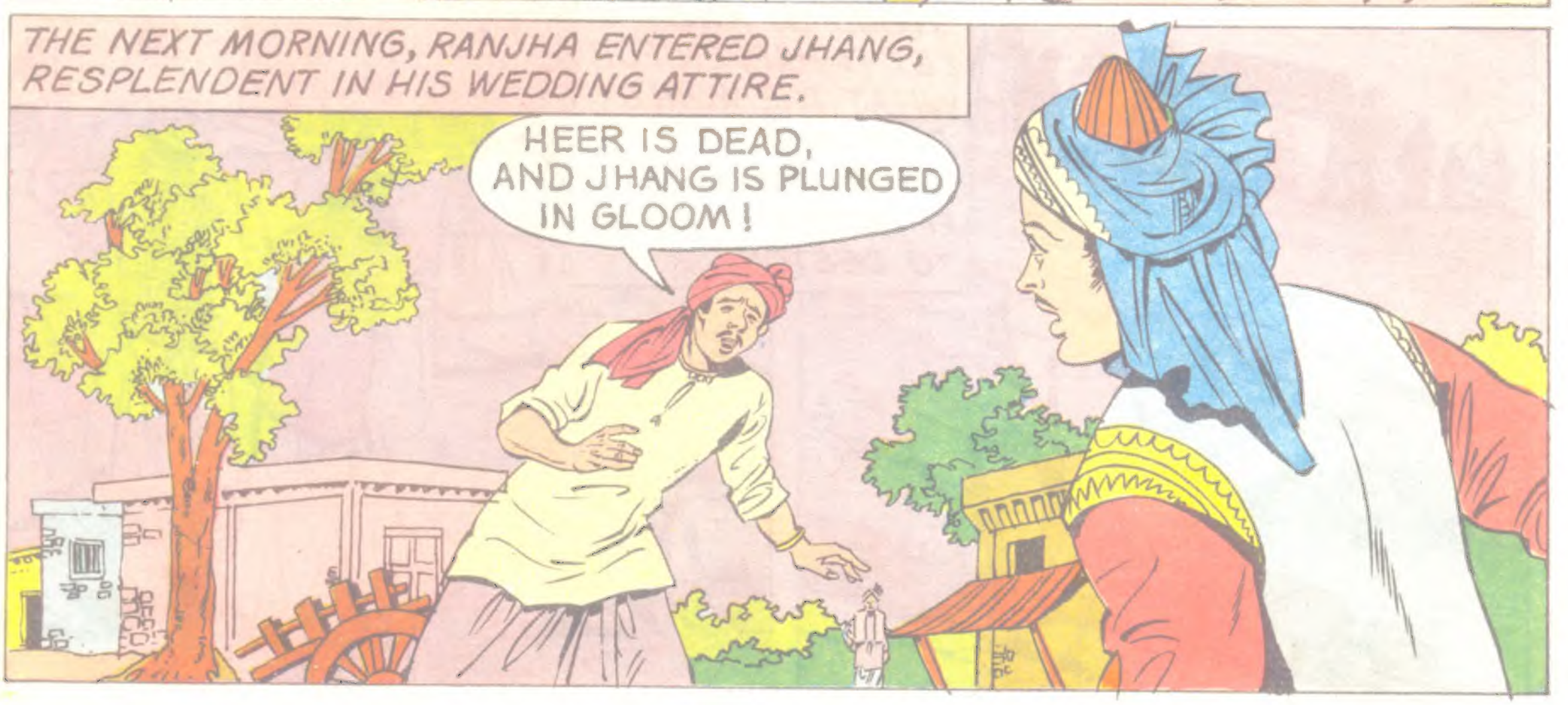
SHE WAS TEASED BY HER FRIENDS, AND LIKED IT.
IT WAS JUST AS BEAUTIFUL THE LAST TIME.
NOT ON YOUR LIFE ! AND MY DRESS TOO.! FEEL LIKE A QUEEN.

THE CONSPIRACY WAS DEEPENING. BENEATH THE HAPPY CONFUSION OF A WEDDING RAN AN UNDERCURRENT OF DECEIT AND TREACHERY.
IT WILL HAVE TO BE POISONED SHERBET. AH, MY HEER, TO DO THIS TO YOU !

*HENNA

WITH KAIDO AIDING AND ABETTING, IT WAS EASY TO ARRANGE. ONE DAY, TIRED AND THIRSTY—
I WOULD LIKE SOME SHERBET.
HERE IS SOME-SPECIALLY PREPARED FOR YOU.


HOURS LATER, AS HEER LAY WRITHING WITH PAIN, SHE REALIZED THE AWFUL TRUTH—SHE HAD NOT MUCH LONGER TO LIVE.
RANJHA, MY BELOVED, CAN'T I SEE YOU JUST ONCE MORE?


THE NEXT MORNING, RANJHA ENTERED JHANG, RESPLENDENT IN HIS WEDDING ATTIRE.
HEER IS DEAD, AND JHANG IS PLUNGED IN GLOOM!

RANJHA FROZE IN HIS TRACKS. THEN, IN A FINAL, BIZARRE, CONTORTED MOVEMENT, HE FELL TO THE GROUND, LIFELESS. HIS AGONIZED CRY RENT THE AIR—
HEER!
HEER AND RANJHA DIED BEFORE THEY HAD BEGUN TO LIVE. THE WORLD STOOD BY AND LET IT HAPPEN FOR WHAT THE WORLD DOES NOT UNDERSTAND, IT SEEKS TO DESTORY.

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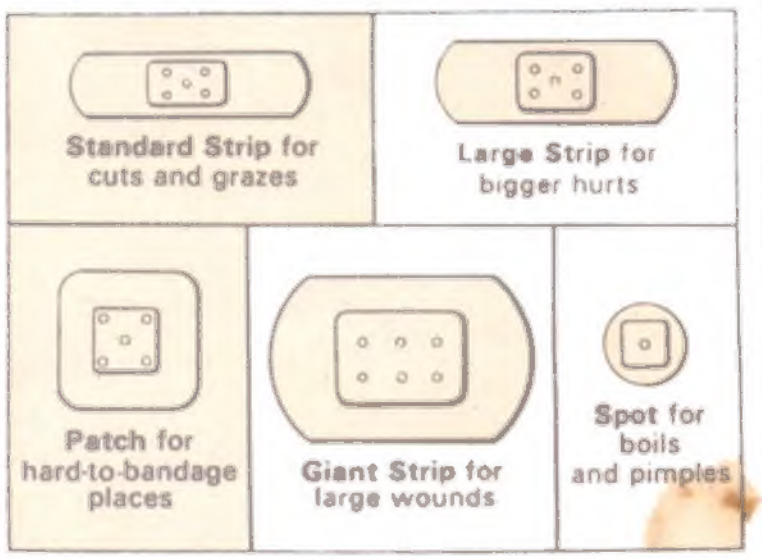

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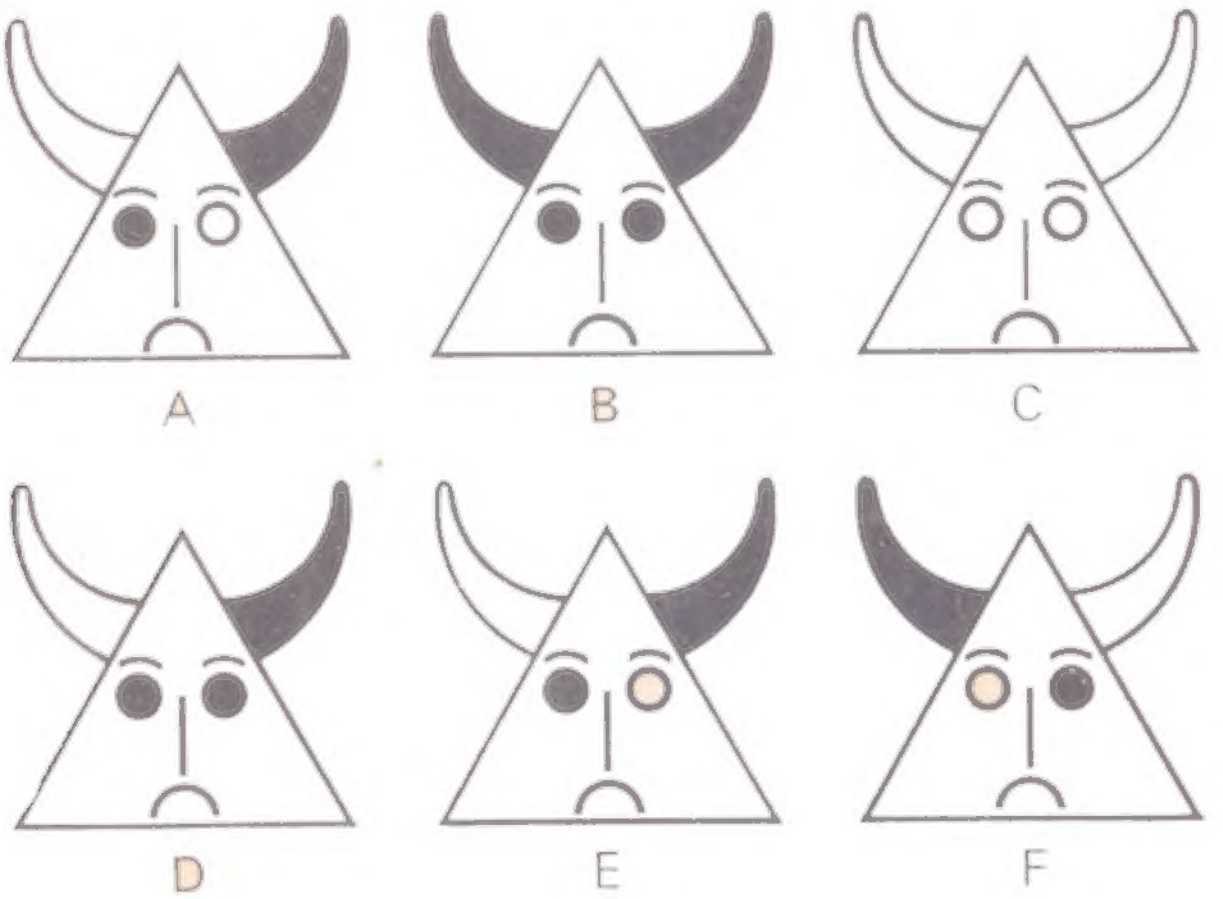
plus a chance to win extra bumper prizes!

Which is the **odd-man-out**?



HURRY! Send in your answer accompained by one empty plastic packet of Cadbury's Gems. The first 500 successful entrants will each get a State Bank Gift Cheque for Rs. 11. That means you also have a chance to win a bumper prize of Rs. 400 on your gift cheque—an extra bonus for the lucky ones!

Please write the answer as well as your name and address in English only, and in block letters. Mail entries to :

"Fun with Gems" Dept. F - 45
Post Box No. 56, Thane 400 601.

Last date for receiving entries :

15th January 1977

COLOURFUL, CHOCOLATE-CENTRED Cadbury's GEMS

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